





# King of the Jews

Matthew 27:32-66

Mark 15:22-47

Luke 23:26-56

John 19:17-42

## *Trial & Crucifixion*

Before the lesson, study the story in all four gospels and combine information to tell the story, choosing one gospel from which to teach.

The entire story of the trial and crucifixion of Christ is told in multiple lessons. This lesson will focus only on crucifixion of Jesus after his trial and sentencing before Pontius Pilate.

### **Give a brief overview of recent events.**

**Triumphal entry:** Just days before, Jesus entered Jerusalem with a triumphal entry, greeted by cheering crowds. (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19)

**Last Supper:** Jesus shared his last supper with his disciples in an upper room (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12)  
He shared a meal with them that we now call communion. Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and tells of his betrayal. (John 13:1-10)

**Mount of Olives:** They left the upper room and went into the mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26), then into the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is arrested.

**Trial:** Jesus is taken to the palace of the high priest where they put him on trial and find him guilty of death. He is then sent to the Roman governor to be sentenced.

**Sentencing:** Jesus is sent to Pontius Pilate to be sentenced to death. Pilate sends him to Herod, Herod sends him back to Pilate, and ultimately Pilate gives in to the demands of the people and delivers Jesus to be crucified.

### **Jesus has been whipped, beaten, and sentenced to death. He is sent away to be crucified.**

This crucifixion takes place during the day before Passover begins at sundown. There is some debate among scholars about which day of the week that Christ was crucified. Historically the church has widely accepted that Christ was crucified on a Friday. It is undisputed from scripture that he rose on the first day of the week, which would have been Sunday. The Jews observe the Sabbath on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, making Sunday the first day of the week.

The Friday death has been questioned because of the claim Jesus made that he would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. (Matthew 12:40) A death on Friday would only be two nights in the grave, and discussion has been made for the most likely date of crucifixion as Thursday.

A reading of John 19:31 says that this particular Sabbath was a high day.

**In the Jewish culture, there were two types of Sabbaths.** The weekly Sabbath began Friday at sundown, and continued until Saturday at sundown. But there is second type of Sabbath: the holiday Sabbath. The Passover Sabbath falls on a particular day of the year (Nisan 15 of the Jewish calendar) rather than a particular day of the week. Whatever day of the week it falls on is treated like the Sabbath, and it is called a high Sabbath. It is believed that this particular year that the high Sabbath fell on Friday, and would make the most sense with the rest of the information we are given. (Luke 23:54) The high Sabbath would have been Thursday night/Friday, and the weekly Sabbath would have followed immediately after on Friday night/ Saturday. This would mean Jesus died Thursday afternoon, leaving him in the grave Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night, and rising early in the morning on Sunday before sunrise.





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This information is for the teacher, to be shared with the students at your discretion. However, it is important to convey to the students that Jesus was crucified on Passover, as he is the scriptural fulfillment of the sacrificial lamb.

**Discuss:** Passover was a feast celebrated every year by the Jews as a reminder of God's deliverance of the Jews from Egypt.

The last of the ten plagues was the death of the first born. The Jews were told to kill a lamb and wipe the blood on the doorposts of their home. When the angel of death saw the homes with the "blood of the lamb" he would "pass over" those homes.

After Jesus left the court of Pilate, he had already suffered greatly. He had been whipped, and beaten and completely humiliated. A huge crowd is following Jesus, and many women who are following are crying and wailing. Jesus tells them not to weep for him, and prophesies the fall of Jerusalem (which followed in 70AD).

**The Romans commanded a man who was passing by, Simon of Cyrene, and forced him to carry Jesus' cross.** It is presumed that Simon was in Jerusalem for the Passover. He is the father of Alexander and Rufus. (Mark 15:21)

Cyrene was in modern day Libya, in northern Africa. Scholars believe that perhaps Simon was dark skinned, and this would have made him an obvious foreigner which could be why he was singled out to carry the cross of Christ. It is often thought that Jesus was struggling to carry the cross, and it would have been the Roman soldiers who forced Simon to carry the cross.

Another interesting thing to note is that the specifics of Rufus and Alexander. It is thought that Mark mentions these names specifically because the people who he was writing to when he wrote the gospel of Mark would have known Rufus and Alexander personally. The name Rufus is mentioned only one other place in the Bible when the apostle Paul mentions Rufus in Romans 16:13. It is assumed by scholars that this is the same Rufus that was the son of Simon the Cyrene. It would stand to reason that perhaps carrying this cross had such an impact on Simon that his family became Christians after the resurrection of Christ.

**They brought Jesus to Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.** Everything in the Word of God has meaning, it is not always clear exactly what that meaning is and many people have tried to interpret with different theories.

This lesson presents some possible options as to the meaning of this name, but none of these have been proven.

Over the centuries, it has been debated as to why this area was called the place of the skull. It is said that to view this area from a distance, one can see tombs in the area in the shape of a skull. There are also theories that this is the place where Adam was buried. This would mean that the original Adam was buried here, and the new Adam, or second Adam, also called the "last Adam," Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:45) was crucified over his grave. The skull of Adam would lie at the foot of the cross, which could be representative of the new "tree of life." It could also be symbolic that the blood of Christ went into the ground to redeem it from the curse and also to redeem the original sin of Adam. However, some scholars suggest that the cataclysmic nature of the Genesis flood may have made it impossible to identify the location of Adam's grave.





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Another possible option is that people believe that this is where David displayed the head of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:54). David cut off Goliath's head after he killed him, and carried his head to Jerusalem. It would have been likely displayed on the highest hill outside of Jerusalem, which would be Golgatha. Goliath's armor - the bronze coat of mail - has been said to be snake-like, thus comparing him to the serpent in the garden of Eden. If his head was displayed here, it is also thought that his skull would have been buried here as well.

**This would symbolize the feet of Jesus - his heel - crushing the head of the serpent. (Genesis 3:15)**

They offered Jesus vinegar to drink with gall, and he tasted it, he would not drink it. (Matthew 27:34) The gospel of Mark says they offered him wine mixed with myrrh and he refused. (Mark 15:23) Some scholars believe that possibly this concoction was some sort of medication offered to him to help allude the pain, others believe it was offered for a mockery. Jesus said at the last supper that he would not drink any wine until the day that he drinks it new in the kingdom of God. (Mark 14:25) They brought him to a place called Calvary, and this is where they crucified Jesus.

**Discuss:** The Bible does not tell the exact process but we know from history.

**His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and he was placed upright on the cross at the top of the highest hill in the center for all to see.**

There were two other criminals on each side of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as the worst of the three as he is put front and center for his "crimes." The other criminals were called thieves; the same word is used for Barabbas, who was released, and called a robber. It is thought to be very possible that these other men on the crosses next to Jesus were also rebels, or revolutionaries just as Barabbas.

**His clothing was removed**, he was naked, and the soldiers cast lots over his clothes.

**Discuss:** What does casting lots look like? They must have had some sort of dice or way to gamble over his clothing.

Many people saw the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus was very well known in that day, and people were curious and came to see him on the cross. Many walked by and said, you were going to destroy the temple and build it back in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. The chief priests, elders, and scribes said,

**"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down off the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let God deliver him; he said he was the Son of God."**

Then one of the thieves on the cross said, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." But the other thief said, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are suffering the same condemnation? We are receiving the reward of our actions, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then that the turned to Jesus and said, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And Jesus responded, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus looked down on all of this from the cross and said,

**"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** (Luke 23:34)





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There was a sign written above Jesus' head that read,

**"Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews."** (Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19) The sign was written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and many of the Jews read it.

The chief priests went to Pilate to tell him to change it. They told him not to write "The King of the Jews," but write that he said he was the King of the Jews.

**But Pilate said, What I have written, I have written.** (John 19:20-22)

What Pilate wrote was the truth, and this was another way God confirmed to the Jews that this was their Messiah. The land grew dark. It was the sixth hour, which was noon. It was dark from noon until 3:00 in the afternoon. What would this be like?

The disciple John (the disciple who Jesus loved) was standing by the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary, the aunt of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and John, he said, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John he said, "Behold your mother!" After this, John took Mary into his home as his mother.

At the ninth hour (3:00 in the afternoon), Jesus called out loudly. He said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabath'tha-ni? The people around did not understand what he was saying. They thought he was calling for Elijah. But what he actually said was,

**"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

Jesus became sin for us. (2 Corinthians 5:21) But sin separates us from God. (Isaiah 59:2) So when Jesus became our sin, God had to turn his back on Jesus; he had to forsake his own Son. This was probably the most difficult thing that Jesus went through. Because he went through this for us, God abandoned Jesus so that we would never be separated from God. (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5) And we know that Jesus is always with us (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus knew now that everything was accomplished. To fulfill scripture, he said, "I'm thirsty," and they dipped a sponge in vinegar, put it on a long stick and held it up to Jesus for him to drink.

**Discuss:** Talk about what this would have been like.

**After Jesus received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished."**

What was finished? This is the culmination of the entire scriptures up to this point. Jesus is God in the flesh as human coming to redeem all of mankind. The relationship between God and man is now restored.

In this, the law has been fulfilled. Everything that had been held against man for centuries has now been finished. We are no longer under the law, and we no longer have a set of rules we have to fulfill to please God. The law was nailed to the cross. (Colossians 2:14) Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). Now we do not have to adhere to all the 613 laws of the Mosaic covenant, we only have to believe in Jesus and receive his righteousness. (Romans 3:22; 5:17)

**And then Jesus said, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."**

Sin results in death. (Romans 6:23) Jesus had no sin in him, but he took on our sin. He himself had no sin, and there was nothing that could make him die. He had to willingly die and voluntarily give up his life. If he had not done this willingly, our sins would not have been atoned. He accepted our sins by choice, and once he gave up the ghost, our sins died with him, and in the sight of God, we were crucified with Christ. (Galatians 2:20)





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He gave up the ghost; he chose to die. Several things happened when Jesus did this.

1. **The veil of the temple was torn in two, but was torn from the top to the bottom.** The main part of the temple represented the earth, and the interior holy of holies represented the heavens. This veil was a symbolic divide between heaven and earth. (Hebrews 9:1-9)

**Discuss:** The veil of the temple was huge. It was a large curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the holy place in the temple. It was torn from the top to the bottom; this would have been impossible to be done by a man.

This veil reached from the wall to wall and ceiling to the floor, and was 60-90 feet (18-27 meters) tall. It would not have been humanly possible to tear this veil, especially in the way that it was torn. Men could have *possibly* torn it from bottom to top, but never from top to bottom. This would have only been an act of God, and the exact timing was the moment that Jesus gave up the ghost. The priests and temple leaders would have had to have seen the symbolism and impossibility of this task, yet it appears that their hardened hearts did not allow them to see the truth.

Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond this veil once a year. (Exodus 30:10; Hebrews 9:7) They went through a purification process before being allowed to enter, and history tells us that they were tied with a rope in case they died in the holy of holies. The other people would then be able to drag their bodies out if they died from impurity. The purification process of the priest signified that Christ as a sinless sacrifice would enter into God's presence and make atonement for us. This veil signified that man was separated from God by sin. (Isaiah 59:2) This veil was torn the very moment that Christ died, indicating that now there is no longer any separation between God and man. The veil signifies Jesus' body, or flesh (Hebrews 10:20) and his death made a new way for us to reach God through our belief in Jesus Christ.

Others have thought that perhaps this not only gives believers access to the Father, but this also freed the Father to fill the earth. (Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 6:3) God inhabited the ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies. Before Christ came, the Spirit of God could not inhabit the earth, only certain believers. (Psalm 51:11) Once Christ died and the veil was torn, this allowed God to freely inhabit the earth and man to boldly approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

2. **There was an earthquake.** The earth shook, and the rocks broke!

The centurion at the foot of the cross saw the earthquake and the things that were done, and he said, certainly this was a righteous man. (Luke 23:47) "Truly this was the Son of God." (Matthew 27:54)

3. **The graves were opened** and bodies of the saints (or godly people) arose, and after the resurrection of Jesus, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27:52)





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The Jews did not want the bodies to stay on the cross as the Sabbath was coming. So they asked Pilate to break their legs (to make them die quicker) and the bodies could be taken away.

The soldiers came and broke the body of the first thief, and the other. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. One of the soldiers pierced his side with the sword, and blood and water came out. **This was to fulfill another scripture that not one bone would be broken.** (Psalm 34:20; Numbers 9:12) And it also fulfilled another scripture, that they will look on him whom they pierced. (Zechariah 12:10)

When it was evening, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea who was also a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. When the centurion confirmed this, they gave the body to Joseph. Joseph had a new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. Joseph bought fine linen, and Nicodemus came with myrrh and spices and they wrapped the body in the linen with the spices.

**Then they placed the body of Jesus in the new tomb where no one had ever been laid**, and a great stone was rolled over the door of the tomb. Some of the women, including Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw where he was laid.

The next day, the chief priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. They told him that Jesus had said he would rise again on the third day. They were concerned that the disciples might come and steal his body and tell people he rose from the dead. They said this would be worse than before, and they requested that guards be set at the tomb.

**Pilate gave his approval; the Jews sealed the stone, and guards were set to watch over the tomb.**



# Jesus in the Story



**Jesus was the Lamb of the Passover.** He was the lamb that was sacrificed for our sins, symbolizing all the sacrifices in the law. He was the fulfillment of the law.

So many of the things that are taking place in this story are a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah.

**Jesus was crucified between two thieves, or revolutionaries.** This fulfilled Isaiah 53:12 that says that Jesus was numbered among the transgressors; some translations say wicked ones or evil doers. (Mark 15:28)

**Soldiers gambled over Jesus' clothes,** fulfilling a prophecy in Psalm 22:17-18. "I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." They could see his bones because he was naked, and there was a large crowd staring at Jesus.

**Jesus was offered the vinegar mixed with gall,** this fulfilled prophecy in Psalm 69:21; "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Gall is also translated bitter herb, or poison. There has been speculation as to a connection to Numbers 5:11-31; but the parallels are not completely understood.

**There was the prophecy of no broken bones, and a pierced side.**

**His burial by a rich man,** Joseph of Arimathaea, was also prophesied in Isaiah 53:9.

**His crucifixion with the thieves,** or criminals was prophesied in Isaiah 53:12: "...he was numbered with the transgressors."

**He asked the Lord to forgive them** (Luke 23:34); "...he made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)

**The people shook their heads** (Matthew 27:39-40) saying if he was the Son of God, come down; fulfills Psalm 109:25.

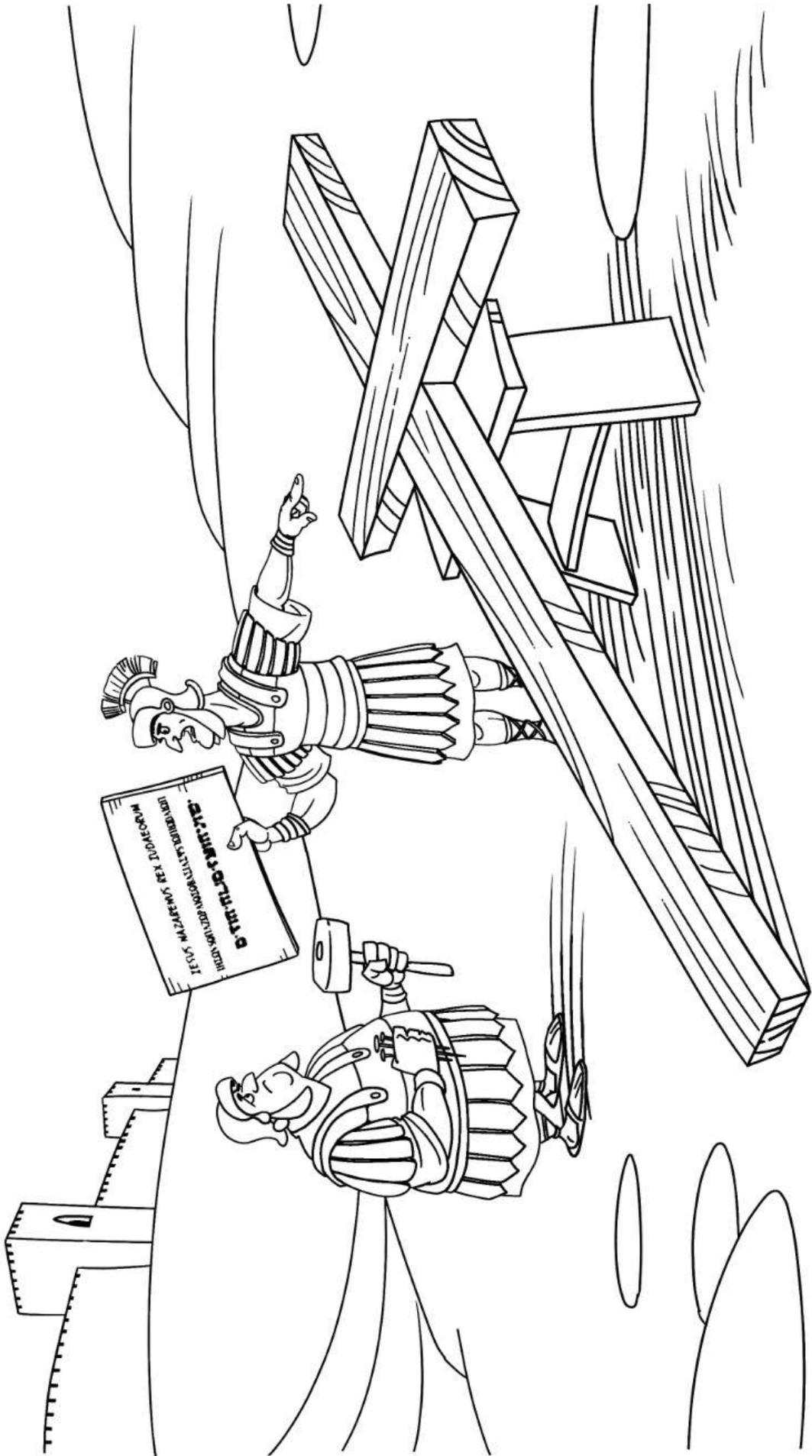
**When Jesus asked why God had forsaken him** (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), it fulfilled Psalm 22:1.

**Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,"** is a fulfillment of Psalm 31:5.

You may end the lesson on a somber note. And you may choose to follow up the following lesson with the resurrection.\*

*\*The details of the resurrection are covered in Finding Jesus: Gospels: An Empty Tomb.*





## Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

### 45. Falsely Accused

1. Have you ever been accused of something you did not do?
2. Did you think it was unfair?
3. What does Matthew 5:44 say to do to people who hate you and despise you?

#### 1 John 3:4-5

**Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.**

### 46. When the Rooster Crows

1. In Mark 14:30, how many times did Jesus say the rooster would crow?
2. In Mark 14:70, why did they think Peter was with Jesus?
3. In Matthew 26:75 and Luke 22:62 what did Peter do after the rooster crowed?
4. In John 21, how many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him?

#### Romans 5:20

**Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.**

### 47. Crucify Him!

Read Matthew 27:11-26; Mark 15:6-11

1. What was the first question that Pilate asked Jesus?
2. What would the governor do for the Jewish people at this feast?
3. Who was Barabbas?
4. What did Pilate's wife say?
5. What did Pilate do in front of all the people? (Matthew 27:24)

#### Isaiah 53:7

**He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth.**

### 48. King of the Jews

Read John 19:17-42

1. What did Pilate write on the sign they placed over the head of Jesus on the cross?
2. Why were the priests upset about what he wrote?
3. When they pierced the side of Jesus, what came out?
4. Who came to take the body of Jesus, and who else came with spices to anoint the body?

#### John 3:14-15

**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**

